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Diana T Fritz 03/21/2007 11:43:20 AM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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TELEGRAM

August 03, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 3593 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: EAGR, PGOV, PREL, SENV, ECON
Captions: None
Subject: UAE RANKS FIFTH AMONG ARAB FARM EXPORTERS -- AT GREAT
COST TO ITS WATER RESOURCES
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 03593

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CXABU:
ACTION: ECON
INFO: P/M AMB DCM POL
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INFO: FCS

DISSEMINATION: ECON
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB: MMWAHBA
DRAFTED: ECON: GARANA
CLEARED: A/DCM: KVANDEVATE; ECON: OBJOHN

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1141
RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 003593

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, OES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/08
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: UAE RANKS FIFTH AMONG ARAB FARM EXPORTERS --
AT GREAT COST TO ITS WATER RESOURCES

¶1. (U) Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba, for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

¶2. (U) Local press reported last week that the UAE ranks fifth among Arab farm exporters according to figures released by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD). The UAE exported products totaling approximately USD \$1.59 billion in 2001, including vegetable and fruit, cereal, meat, eggs, dairy and other products. The 2001 export value was nearly double the 1995 amount and was ten times higher than the amount recorded when the UAE was created in 1971. The UAE has spent USD \$4.2 billion on agriculture in the last decade, increasing the

production of native and non-native crops.

¶2. (SBU) The UAE's stunning agricultural performance is even more remarkable -- or incongruous -- in context: the country's mean annual rainfall is only about 100 mm and 90 percent of the land mass is situated in one of the hottest, driest deserts in the world. The emphasis on agriculture, and the general greening of the desert, is a direct mandate from Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, Ruler of Abu Dhabi Emirate and President of the UAE since its inception. Shaykh Zayed has said, "Give me agriculture, and I give you civilization" -- and the Emiratis have taken this doctrine to heart. According to UAEG estimates, there are approximately 36,000 farms in the country (up from about 11,000 in 1980), ranging in size from 2.5-4 hectares. Abu Dhabi Emirate, which includes Al Ain, the ancestral home of the ruling Al-Nahyan family, has two-thirds of the farms in the country. There are usually four wells per farm in Abu Dhabi, with no licensing procedures for drilling. Wells are drilled either privately or with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture.

¶3. (C) Comment: The expansion of agriculture has had a tremendous impact on the UAE's limited groundwater resources. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimated in 1995-96 that groundwater reserves would be depleted in 10-25 years and brackish water would be depleted in 200 years. Though the UAEG still estimates that groundwater will be depleted within ten years, USGS now estimates that groundwater reserves will probably be depleted within five years. Embassy interlocutors told Econoff that UAE agriculture is increasingly dependent on desalinated water, especially in Abu Dhabi Emirate. Abu Dhabi currently has six desalination plants, with a seventh to come on-line in 2004, with daily usage around 300 million gallons per day. The UAE has the second highest per capita water usage in the world after the United States, a figure skewed in part by the excessive amount of water used for agriculture. End comment.

Wahba